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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-15	AID-01	AMAD-01	A-01	CA-02	CCO-00
	CIAE-00	SJK-01	CTME-00	C-01	DODE-00	DS-00	FBO-01
	HA-09	H-01	IMMC-01	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03	ADS-00
	M-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-06	OMB-01	OPR-01	PA-01
	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	SCT-03	SNP-01	SP-01	SR-01
	SSC-01	SSO-00	SS-01	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00	USSS-00

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O 102045Z FEB 92  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8225  
INFO USCINCO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 01402

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PGOV, VE  
SUBJECT: CALDERA CAMP VIEWS THE COUP ATTEMPT  
AND ITS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: FOURTEEN SUPPORTERS OF FORMER PRESIDENT  
RAFAEL CALDERA, [REDACTED] HOSTED A  
FEBRUARY 8 LUNCHEON FOR POLCOUNS AND POLOFF TO "IMPROVE  
RELATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY" AND EXCHANGE VIEWS.

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UNSURPRISINGLY, THE CONVERSATION CENTERED ON THE RECENT  
COUP ATTEMPT. CALDERA SUPPORTERS BELIEVE (AND SOME SMALL  
OPINION POLLS AGREE) THAT CALDERA'S NATIONAL STANDING HAS  
BEEN GREATLY ENHANCED BY THE COUP ATTEMPT AND BY HIS  
RESPONSE, WHICH HAS BEEN TO CALL FOR RECTIFICATION OF  
CORRUPTION AND FOR CHANGES IN ECONOMIC POLICY. END  
SUMMARY.

LUNCH WITH CALDERISTAS

3. FOURTEEN SUPPORTERS OF FORMER PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON  
CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE/CASE ID: 06 DEC 2006 200503206

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HOSTED A LUNCH FOR POLCOUNS AND POLOFF ON FEBRUARY 8 IN  
THE HOME OF

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THE CALDERISTAS

COMMENTED AS FOLLOWS.

THE FEBRUARY 4 COUP ATTEMPT

4. ONE PARTICIPANT CLAIMED TO HAVE SEEN A LIST, PURPORTING TO SHOW TOP JOBS UNDER THE POST-COUP "COUNCIL OF THE NATION". THIS COUNCIL WAS TO HAVE INCLUDED MILITARY OFFICERS AS MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT AND OF THE PRESIDENCY, PLUS EIGHT FUNCTIONAL AREAS. AT THE TOP WAS SIMPLY "SR. (BLANK), PRESIDENTE DE LA REPUBLICA; HE TOOK THIS TO MEAN THAT THE TOP JOB WAS TO BE OFFERED TO A CIVILIAN. SOME CALDERISTAS BELIEVED THAT "ZETA" AND "EL  
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NUEVO PAIS" PUBLISHER RAFAEL POLEO WAS THIS CIVILIAN. THEY CITED HIS DAUGHTER PATRICIA'S "HASTY" DEPARTURE FROM CARACAS ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, AS ONE PIECE OF EVIDENCE IN THIS REGARD. PATRICIA POLEO ALLEGEDLY CALLED AROUND TOWN THE MORNING OF HER DEPARTURE IN AN ATTEMPT TO BORROW DOLLARS. OTHERS AT THE GATHERING SPECULATED THAT "FISCAL" (ATTORNEY GENERAL AND OMBUDSMAN) RAMON ESCOVAR SALOM COULD HAVE BEEN THE CIVILIAN PRESIDENT. POLCOUNS ASKED IF HE WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED; SEVERAL PERSONS LAUGHED THAT ESCOVAR WANTS THE JOB OF PRESIDENT SO BADLY, HE WOULD TAKE IT FROM ANYONE'S HANDS. THE MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL WERE ALLEGEDLY TO HAVE BEEN, INTER ALIA, FORMER MILITARY INTELLIGENCE (DIM) CHIEF HERMINIO FUENMAYOR AND FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE ADMIRAL HECTOR JURADO TORO.  
(COMMENT: DESPITE THE CLAIM OF HAVING SEEN THE LIST, THESE RUMORS ARE NOT VERY CREDIBLE.)

5. ANOTHER CALDERISTA AT THE LUNCH CLAIMED TO KNOW, FROM A COLONEL WHO WAS PRESENT WITH OCHOA, THAT WHEN COUP LEADER LT. COL. CHAVEZ FRIAS AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE OCHOA ANTICH TALKED BY TELEPHONE DURING THE COUP ATTEMPT, CHAVEZ FRIAS SUPPOSEDLY OFFERED THE MINISTER LEADERSHIP OF THE COUP EFFORT. OCHOA ANTICH IN REPLY SUPPOSEDLY DISCLAIMED ANY PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE COUP ATTEMPT, AND SIMPLY

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PLEDGED TO GUARANTEE CHAVEZ' PERSONAL SECURITY IF HE AGREED TO SURRENDER. THE CALDERISTAS CONCLUDED THEIR DISCUSSION OF CHAVEZ WITH THE JUDGMENT THAT, IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER THE COUP, CHAVEZ FRIAS HAD BECOME THE MOST POPULAR PERSON IN VENEZUELA, "A VENEZUELAN RAMBO."

CALDERA

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6. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THESE CALDERISTAS ALL EXPRESSED THEIR BELIEF THAT ONLY THEIR MAN CAN ADEQUATELY RESPOND TO THE COUNTRY'S MANY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THEY ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE COUP ATTEMPT AND ITS AFTERMATH, PARTICULARLY CALDERA'S FEBRUARY 4 INTERVENTION IN CONGRESS, GREATLY ENHANCED HIS PRESIDENTIAL PROSPECTS. THEY BELIEVE THAT HE IS NOW THE SECOND MOST POPULAR PERSON IN VENEZUELA, BEHIND COUP LEADER CHAVEZ FRIAS. THEY MAINTAIN THAT CALDERA DELIBERATELY CHOSE TO "BREAK THE CONSENSUS" IN HIS CONGRESSIONAL INTERVENTION TO PROVIDE A SORT OF NATIONAL CATHARSIS BY "TELLING THE TRUTH" ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE COUNTRY. THEY CITE POLL RESULTS FROM THE SATURDAY PRESS (BASICALLY, MAN-IN-THE-STREET POLLS OF ABOUT 200 PERSONS EACH), WHICH SHOWED CALDERA FAR AHEAD OF ALL OTHER POLITICIANS IN PUBLIC OPINION. THEY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 01402

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PGOV, VE  
SUBJECT: CALDERA CAMP VIEWS THE COUP ATTEMPT  
DEFINED THE PRIORITIES OF A CALDERA PRESIDENCY AS GOOD  
(COMPETENT) GOVERNMENT, HONESTY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COUP

7. THE CALDERISTAS SAW THE COUP ATTEMPT AS A "MESSAGE" TO  
THE GOVERNMENT TO INSTITUTE BASIC CHANGES OR RISK  
OVERTHROW. POLCOUNS EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT THE  
ECONOMIC REFORM PACKAGE WAS OF DIRECT SIGNIFICANCE TO THE  
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COUP OR POPULAR ATTITUDES TOWARD IT: SURELY, CORRUPTION  
AND GOVERNMENTAL INCOMPETENCE WERE MORE IMPORTANT FACTORS  
IN POPULAR DISCONTENT, AND EVEN IN THE DISCONTENT OF THE  
MILITARY. WHILE NOT DENYING THAT POLLS INDICATE THIS IS  
SO, THE CALDERISTAS REPLIED THAT IT IS POVERTY AND HARD  
ECONOMIC TIMES THAT MAKE THE PEOPLE CARE SO MUCH ABOUT  
CORRUPTION AND BAD GOVERNMENT. IF PEOPLE HAD GOOD JOBS AT  
GOOD PAY, THEY WOULD RETURN TO THEIR TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE  
OF TOLERANCE.

8. WHEN ASKED HOW THE ECONOMY COULD BE TURNED AROUND AS  
QUICKLY AS THEY SEEMED TO THINK WAS NEEDED, THE  
CALDERISTAS WERE LONG ON GENERALITIES AND SHORT ON  
SPECIFICS. THEY REPEATED THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE  
BECOME TOTALLY ALIENATED FROM THE PEOPLE AND PURSUE ONLY  
THEIR OWN INTERESTS. ONLY CALDERA, BY THEIR ANALYSIS, IS  
ABOVE THE GENERAL DECLINE. THEIR POSITION APPEARED TO

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BOIL DOWN TO THIS: THAT WITH CALDERA RUNNING THINGS, NOT ONLY WOULD POLICIES CHANGE IN UNSPECIFIED WAYS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCY RISE, BUT THE PEOPLE (BECAUSE THEY WOULD HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR GOVERNMENT) WOULD BE WILLING TO WAIT AND WOULD NOT EXPECT MIRACLES.

9. SEVERAL OLDER MEN MENTIONED WITH CONCERN THE EXPERIENCE OF JANUARY 1958 -- E.G., THERE WAS AN UNSUCCESSFUL COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST DICTATOR PEREZ JIMENEZ (WHO HAD, MANY STILL CLAIM, SUBSTANTIAL POPULARITY), FOLLOWED THREE WEEKS LATER BY THE SUCCESSFUL COUP THAT FORCED HIM INTO EXILE AND INAUGURATED VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY. THE CALDERISTAS STRESSED REPEATEDLY THAT A REPLAY IS THE LAST THING THEY WANT, SINCE THEY SEE THEIR

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MAN AS THE PROBABLE NEXT PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA IF PEREZ SERVES OUT HIS TIME AND ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE AS EXPECTED IN DECEMBER 1993.  
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